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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: ANGRY WORDS AND CRITICISM OF RULING FAMILY MARK
PARLIAMENT SESSION

REF: A. KUWAIT 1055
[B](#). KUWAIT 623
[C](#). KUWAIT 1034

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Partisan differences characterized parliament's November 17 session, which swirled around ongoing plans to interpellate the PM and several other Cabinet ministers. Important legislative items were deferred while MPs wrangled over attempts by public prosecutors to lift immunity on several MPs in order to permit them to face charges they had defamed the ruling family during last Spring's elections. In a display of gall unusual even by Kuwait's relaxed standards, some MPs pointedly criticized the ruling family for indulging in internal squabbles and failing to provide needed leadership. The MPs attempted to return to a more business-like mode on November 18, however, and spent much of the morning discussing a labor bill; by afternoon, however, angry exchanges over the bill forced the Speaker to adjourn the session and postpone further consideration of the bill until December 8. While the GOK is clearly being challenged by the various grilling motions, there are indications the PM and other ministers will be encouraged to face the music so that the legislative session can move on. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The National Assembly's November 17 session was characterized by bitter words and acrimony. Deferring an expected discussion of an important, and deeply contentious, proposal favored by tribalists under which the GOK would assume some responsibility for private consumer debt, the session instead focused on a request by public prosecutors to lift immunity from a number of prominent MPs -- Dr. Dhaifallah BuRamiah, Mohammed Hayef, Saadoun Hammad, Khaled Al-Sultan, Marzouq Al-Ghanim and Faisal Al-Mislem -- so they can be prosecuted on charges that they had libeled the ruling family and senior leadership in the press or other public media during last spring's election season. In the midst of the debate over the lifting of these immunities, a number of MPs took the opportunity to volubly criticize the ruling Al Sabah leadership for its continuing divisions and inept management. Liberal MP Abdullah Al-Roumi warned the ruling family "You are in danger. You must put an end to these disputes that are impacting parliament and the whole country." Fellow Liberal MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem criticized the ruling family for surrounding itself with "a corrupt entourage" and of failing to present a coherent national vision for the future.

[1](#)3. (C) In another angry exchange, tribalist MP Khaled Al-Tahous complained bitterly about his detention by state security forces for several days during the election season on grounds that he had uttered words that "threatened the nation." In response, Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Khaled Al Sabah told Al-Tahous to "shut up" (for which he

was admonished by Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi), and added that Al-Tahous should "thank" state security for ensuring the safety of the nation and should express shame for what he had done. Hurling a barb of his own, tribalist MP Musallam-Al-Barrak urged the Interior Minister to "go to the judiciary" if he feels he has a case against an MP, but not to "use the state security to detain candidates."

14. (C) In the midst of these exchanges, a number of MPs have moved forward with threats to grill the Prime Minister and several ministers. In addition to a motion to interpellate PM Shaykh Nasser Al Sabah over alleged misuse of office funds and bribes to MPs, as announced by MP Faisal Al-Mislim on November 4 (ref A), interpellation motions have been filed against the Interior Minister (on grounds that he misled parliament during his grilling last May on charges of having approved a contract to erect election billboards -- Ref B), and Minister of Public Works Dr. Fadhil Ali Safar (on responsibility for the Mishref sewage treatment facility disaster -- Ref C). Additional interpellation motions against First Deputy PM and Defense Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Sabah (on charges related to military contracts), Finance Minister Mustafa Jassem Al-Shamali (on the consumer loans issue) and Public Health Minister Roudhan Al-Roudhan (for inadequate hospital services) are anticipated.

15. (C) Taking a brief respite from the acrimony, the Parliament session on November 18 avoided, at least in the morning session attended by Political Counselor, the anger and personal attacks of the November 17 session. Discussion focused on amendments to a Labor bill, with some expectation that the bill would be completed and voted on before the end

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of the day. Anger built during the day, however and, by afternoon, a resurgence of vituperative exchanges led the Speaker to adjourn the session and postpone further discussion of the bill until December 8.

16. (C) Comment: The PM's grilling is slated to occur on December 8 and, unless the government finds a way to forestall it -- perhaps referring it to the Constitutional Court -- or unless the Amir chooses to view the interpellation motion as an inappropriate crossing of the "redline" protecting the ruling family and dissolves the parliament, the public grilling would represent the first time an Al Sabah official of the PM's rank has submitted to this procedure. Notwithstanding the heat and anger aired during the November 17 session and clear GOK frustration over the interpellation motions against the PM and other cabinet members, there are signs that the government may stay the course and ride out the wave of attacks coming from Islamist and tribalist members. Parliament Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi recently opined to the Ambassador that the GOK will allow the PM to face the grillings and move on. Pro-government Shi'a MP Dr. Hassan Jowhar told Political Counselor essentially the same thing on November 17, noting that the Amir had recently told him and a group of other pro-government MPs that it was his intention to allow the PM and other ministers to face the grillings without dissolving the parliament. Jowhar, noting that the GOK has a workable majority in parliament, was optimistic that the GOK and parliament can together move beyond the present phase of acrimony and get some work done on behalf of Kuwait. For the GOK to submit to the interpellation of a ruling family PM would represent a further -- and not insignificant -- erosion of the government's power vis-a-vis the parliament. (Such a move, however, could pave the way for the PM slot in future to be filled by someone from outside the family, as the constitution makes clear is perfectly permissible.) All assurances to the contrary, it remains unclear that the government is prepared to allow such a concession in the event that all efforts to forestall the motion fail. End Comment.

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